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INTRODUCTION: THE IMPORTANCE OF RHETORIC FOR ARGUMENTATION

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I. Setting the Theme:

Michael Billig (1993:121), identifies 'rhetoric' as "the traditional study and practice of argumentation...". Billig's comment recaptures an ancient understanding: that there is an essential connection between rhetoric and argumentation. It harkens back to the linking of these ideas in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*¹. Commenting on that text, Myles Burnyeat (1994:12-13) notes "the thought content of a speech ... is fundamentally argument. More often than not, it is argument in a context where certainty and conclusive proof are not to be had ... yet a judgment must be made." These contexts are public contexts. The argumentation at stake here is not, exclusively, the argumentation of academics but the broader domain of persuasive and investigative discourse that arises in the marketplace, the media, on the internet, and in the everyday conversations of citizens, and which thence may find its way into the academy. 'Argumentation' is the site of an activity, where reasons are given and appraised, where beliefs are recognized and justified, where personal development is encouraged. Rhetoric's engagement with discourse in such contexts is the natural complement to argumentation so conceived. In fact, as the above would suggest, we can find in Aristotle a much closer association of the two.

II. Argument and Rhetoric in Aristotle:

While it can be argued that the logical tradition has impressed upon us a particular sense of 'argument' as a premise-conclusion set, largely omitting dialectical and rhetorical senses, so Ricoeur (1977) detects a similar movement of exclusion in the history of rhetoric. What has survived, he insists, is a "restricted rhetoric," shorn from its roots in argumentation, and reduced to just one of its three parts-style. He concludes, rather harshly, that, as a result of this, rhetoric "became the erratic and futile discipline that died during the last century" (1977:28).² This may well account for the negative connotations that tend to attach to rhetoric in our own century, but such negativity is not justified toward the Aristotelian origins. Aristotle's rhetoric is grounded in method, linked to his dialectical and ethical works, and eschews the exploitation of audiences (Irwin, 1996). Rhetoric is introduced as a counterpart to dialectic (*Rhet.* I.1.1354a). While it shares some features with dialectic, it contains elements, such as the interests in *ethos* and *pathos*, which are not found there. Even its third major constituent, logical argument, suggests more than was conveyed by that concept in the dialectical works. Rhetorical argument is concerned with *pisteis* (proofs or convictions-*Rhet.* I.1.1355a), which are a type of demonstration (*apodeixis*). And rhetorical *apodeixis* is enthymeme, which is a type of reasoning (*Rhet.* I.1.1355a). But the logic here is quite informal because, as Burnyeat (1994:31) notes, "not all the patterns of argument he illustrates can be fitted into the syllogistic mould." In fact, while the rhetoric is presented as an art, the *pisteis* involved comprise both artistic (entechnic) and nonartistic (atechnic) forms. The first, artistic, involves invention, the constructions of the arguer. The non-artistic are proofs that already exist in the form of witnesses, testimony, and the such (*Rhet.* I.2.1355b). So, 'proof' and 'enthymeme' are central concepts in understanding

rhetorical argument, but it is the second of these that is most disputed as to its meaning and which therefore requires a more extensive discussion.

II.1 Enthymeme:

In Book I of the *Rhetoric*, the enthymeme is introduced as "a sort of syllogism [or reasoning]" which is different from "a logical syllogism" (*Rhet.*I.1.1355a). Later Aristotle explains, "just as in dialectic there is on the one hand induction [*epagoge*] and on the other hand syllogism and the apparent syllogism, so the situation is similar in rhetoric; for the *paradeigma* ["example"] is an induction, the *enthymema* a syllogism. I call a rhetorical syllogism an enthymeme, a rhetorical induction a paradigm" (*Rhet.* I.2.1356b). This appears to establish the enthymeme as the rhetorical equivalent of a deductive argument form. However, as Aristotle goes on to explain the idea, it is "to show that if some premises are true, something else [the conclusion] beyond them results from these because they are true" (*Rhet.* I.2.1356b). The exact relation between premises and conclusion is not clarified and, as we will see from Burnyeat, there is a "relaxed" way of interpreting this. Finally here, we should note what is taken to be the key definition of 'enthymeme' in the *Rhetoric*:

Thus, it is necessary for an enthymeme and a paradigm to be concerned with things that are for the most part capable of being other than they are — the paradigm inductively, the enthymeme syllogistically — and drawn from few premises and often less than those of the primary syllogism; for if one of these is known, it does not have to be stated, since the hearer supplies it (*Rhet.* I.2.1357a).

There are three important things to note about the enthymeme here. The first is with respect to its content: it is concerned with things that are capable of being otherwise. That is, it deals with probability, not necessity. The second point has to do with its relation to the audience: it is not context free but anticipates, in its organization, the active involvement of the audience.

We return to both these points below. It is the third point which concerns us here, and that has to do with the form of the enthymeme. The passage above appears to endorse the traditional view of the (Aristotelian) enthymeme as an incomplete syllogism, comprising a premise and conclusion. Whether this is the Aristotelian view is the point in question, and answering this question will get us much closer to the meaning of 'enthymeme' in the *Rhetoric*.

The tradition that understands 'enthymeme' as an incomplete syllogism is so established that this is often seen as the definition of the term (See Hitchcock, 1985; Quine, 1972). As David Hitchcock (1995:116) notes, the tradition thus shifts away from Aristotle's principal concern in terms of the premises being "probabilities or signs." Kennedy (1991:42) agrees: In his commentary to the *Rhetoric* he observes that the enthymeme having an assumed premise, while often the case, "*is not a necessary feature of the enthymeme*" (my italics). "The real determinant of an enthymeme in contrast to a syllogism is what a popular audience will understand ... [rhetoric is] addressed to an audience that cannot be assumed to follow intricate logical argument." The understanding here is that an enthymeme should be a brief, noncomplex argument.

Burnyeat (1994, 1996) takes the analysis much further, including a challenge to the utility of the enthymeme as an incomplete syllogism, which has become "a useless relic of the textbook tradition" (1994:5). He attributes the understanding of enthymemes as abbreviated syllogisms to an integration of Stoic and Aristotelian logic in the commentaries of late antiquity (1996:91), with the principal idea being of Stoic origin (1994:42).

Burnyeat's challenge to the tradition is a double one. In the first instance, he traces the "confusion" to a line near the end of the *Prior Analytics*: "An enthymeme is an incomplete (*ateles*) *sullogismos* from likelihoods or signs" (70a10).

But the *ateles* here, omitted from most significant manuscripts, is wrong. The sentence without the term is repeated three times in the *Rhetoric*: "An enthymeme is a *sullogismos* from likelihoods or signs." But even here, and this is the second part of Burnyeat's challenge, he doubts whether Aristotle wrote the sentence.

That is, the Aristotelian enthymeme is to be explained neither as an abbreviated syllogism in accordance with the traditional doctrine, nor as a syllogism from likelihoods and signs ... nor even as a *sullogismos* in some other sense from likelihoods or signs. It may be true that the enthymeme is a *sullogismos* from likelihoods or signs, but that is not its definition. (1994:10)

Enthymeme is introduced by Aristotle with little or no explanation (*Rhet.* I.1.1354a). This suggests that he expects his audience to be familiar with the term, which further suggests that he is drawing on a contemporary usage where it simply means the thoughts or ideas a speaker wishes to communicate to an audience. So the enthymeme here is not a technical term, not a syllogism in the accepted (by us) sense; it is a speech which conveys ideas to an audience in order to demonstrate something. Since this involves advancing arguments, the enthymeme is a kind of argument [*sullogismos*].

The passage from *Rhetoric* I.2.357a still needs consideration because there Aristotle specifically refers to the enthymeme being drawn from few premises, and often less than the primary syllogism. But of course, as we can now read this, 'often' does not mean 'always', and so that cannot be central to the definition of the term; nor does 'few' mean 'one' (as in the "traditional" enthymeme). In fact, one could insist that 'few' entails more than one. All that really is required from this is that an enthymeme be brief so that it can be effective with its audience.

Although Aristotle illustrates the suppression of premises that an audience can supply with a two-premise argument in which one is commonly known, here (as at *Rhet.* II.21.1394a when he adds premises to maxims in a similar way) the resulting arguments are not syllogisms.

Finally, to show further that the repeated references to *sullogismos* need not mean "syllogism" in the accepted sense, Burnyeat (1994:28-29) recalls that Aristotle divides proofs into *sullogismos* and *epagoge* (normally translated as "deductive" and "inductive"). But, since some non-deductive inferences are not cases of *epagoge*, then *sullogismos* must include arguments in which premises do not purport to necessitate their conclusions.

Burnyeat's argument represents a compelling case for reading Aristotle's enthymeme as a more informal type of reasonable argument. It certainly lays to rest any vestiges of the incomplete syllogism of the tradition.

As forms of probable argument, enthymemes can take on a number of different strategies or lines of argument. In Chapter 23 of Book II, Aristotle details twenty-eight of such "topics," which include a number of strategies that should be familiar to contemporary argumentation theorists. Topic #6 involves "[turning] what has been said against oneself upon the one who said it" (*Rhet.* II.23.1398a), for example, and others cover a range of topics from 'definition' (Topic #7) and 'division' (Topic #9), to induction (Topic #10) and precedent (Topic #11), to arguing from consequence (Topic #13) and 'consequences by analogy' (Topic #15). A particularly effective aspect of enthymeme (since "people enjoy things said in general terms that they happen to assume ahead of time in a partial way"-*Rhet.* II.21.1393b) is the maxim [*gnome*], although Aristotle's successors tended to treat the gnomonic utterance as a stylistic device rather than the tool of logical argument that he considered it (Kennedy,

1991:182). The maxim serves to illustrate the popular nature or 'publicness'³ of rhetorical argument. In this regard, we shall recall, the enthymeme does not exhaust the category of common proofs [*pisteis*] but is joined by the paradigm or example. And the paradigm, in turn, can be 'historical' or, in the form of fables, 'fictional' (*Rhet.* II.20.1393a-b). Thus, the sphere of argumentation is widened even further to embrace the use of these types of 'narrative'.

The popularity alluded to here may be the most significant aspect of rhetorical argument, particularly in regard to its logical cousin. McCabe (1994) reminds us of how "austere" Aristotle's model of argument is elsewhere—comprising collections of propositions which are related to a conclusion. Validity is then a *characteristic* of the argument, divorced from context. To its credit, the human mind has the capacity to *see* this validity. But on the down side, the mind is *passive* in doing so. Were this character to carry over to rhetorical argument, the arguer and audience would be insignificant. But this is exactly where rhetorical argument, in requiring the *active* involvement of arguer and audience, is distinctive. McCabe (1994:155) puts this well:

Unlike pure syllogisms, they [enthymemes] cannot be purely formal, because they are embedded in the possibilities *that interest us*... Enthymemes, that is, cannot be formalized away from their context in the easy way that syllogisms can.

Part of this context is the active involvement of the audience—supplying assumptions where required, assessing the reasoning, judging the evidence for the action proposed. This role gives autonomy to the audience; audiences are not just pawns in a game "but active moral agents to be taken with due seriousness" (McCabe, 1994:161).

In concluding these remarks on the nature of the enthymeme, we would emphasize that as the primary model of rhetorical argument it should be seen as distinct from the formal model of "logical argument." And its relation to audience, particularly through its associations with *ethos* and *pathos*, illustrates how rhetorical argumentation is distinct from its strict dialectical counterpart. Relaxing the logical requirements of the enthymeme does not weaken or marginalize it; quite the opposite. Burnyeat (1996:91) himself acknowledges this:

Aristotle's doctrine of the enthymeme embodies the claim that the clash of opposing arguments in deliberative and forensic gatherings is a positive expression of human reasonableness in a world where issues are complex and deciding them is difficult, because there really is something to be said on either side. As such, Aristotle's doctrine of the enthymeme is one of his greatest and most original achievements.

II.2 Audience:

The sense of audience for rhetorical argumentation is restricted by Aristotle to those interested in nonscientific, popular, less "rationally compelling arguments" (Irwin, 1996:143). But the range of audiences appropriate to rhetorical argumentation can be considerably wider. McCabe (1994) has stressed the active, autonomous nature of the audiences in rhetorical argumentation. Other features follow from this characteristic. Since audiences are *affected* by the argument, they need to be appropriately disposed towards its ideas and strategies. This is the link to *pathos*. They need also to be so disposed toward the arguer. This is the link to *ethos*. In these terms, we can see that rhetorical argumentation is about context and the context it is about includes, essentially, *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos*.

Plato's *Phaedrus* had advocated the need for the "legitimate" rhetorical arguer to know the types of soul in an audience in order to address the appropriate discourses to the corresponding types. Aristotle handles this in two ways: he considers the nature of audiences in terms of their interests, speaking of those who are old, young, and in between; and, secondly, he discusses the emotions which can be brought about in an audience in order to move them in certain directions. In the *Rhetoric*, emotions, despite being nonrational, are subject to reason (Nehamas, 1994:263), they can be evoked and directed by rational considerations. (Aristotle also discusses the wrong way to appeal to emotions.)

Aristotle is concerned with the *ethos* (character) of the speaker, who needs to establish credibility and demonstrate positive character traits (*Rhet.* I.2.1356a; II.1.1377b).⁴ The reason why the speaker's character is important to the decisions of an audience is seen in the elements which are valued in that character: practical wisdom [*phronesis*], virtue [*arete*], and good will [*eunoia*] (*Rhet.* II.1.1378a). Character comprises a person's capacities and habits that direct her or his actions and ends. Thus, as Amelie Rorty (1996:13) points out, "a person's character can be summarized by his ends: they form an organized system of ordered preferences, the structure of his practical reasoning." A person who is known to reason well, an audience might consider, is probably a person whose arguments can be trusted. At the least, we should expect an initial presumption in favour of such a person.

But Aristotle is not just interested in the *ethos* of the arguer. He employs fables or narrative for argumentative ends. They can be used to illustrate a comparison or likeness between one event and another (*Rhet.* II.20.1394a), and narratives can also illustrate the questionable character of an opponent (*Rhet.* III.15.1416a). It is in regard to this that Christopher Carey (1996:414) notes: "in the hands of a master, *ethos*, in the sense of dramatic characterization, may fulfil the role of argument."

In summary, Aristotle's *Rhetoric* offers important features and advice for the development of a more contemporary analysis of rhetoric and argumentation. While a key difference exists in that Aristotle is concerned to train speakers to speak, it is not hard to develop his ideas to further include the producers of general argumentation, verbal or written. And, again, while the Aristotelian enthymeme is by nature brief, more extended arguments, themselves comprised of simpler pieces, can be brought under the rubric of rhetorical argumentation.

Aristotle gives us a model of contextual argumentation, with a deep appreciation of audiences and a highly original concept of 'argument'. Rhetorical argumentation deals with what is possible, not what is necessary, concerning itself with what "could be other than it is." It thus involves judgement, decision and action. Its ethical dimension is evident from the kinds of issues it addresses and the roles played by *pathos* and *ethos*.

The sense of 'rhetoric' that emerges from this discussion is not, then, that associated with abuse or exploitation, but is surprisingly contemporary. It is, to borrow Richard Andrews' (1995:30) observation, rhetoric as "'the arts of discourse' with all the associations of discourse embedded in social contexts."

III. Argument and Rhetoric Today:

One point which is clear so far, is that stressing the rhetorical in a model of argumentation involves more than just an evaluation of the PPC products of arguing; it concerns also the understanding of those products. Or, to sharpen the focus further, the evaluation of argumentation must include the understanding, and this understanding involves looking beyond the product to the context in which it arises and its rhetorical features. Aristotle's

'context' had three principal constituents; later rhetoricians have added other factors like 'message' and 'common code' (Kennedy, 1991:47).

A theory of argumentation which deals only with the isolated products will be inadequate. Wenzel (1987b:107-108) reveals as much when he writes: "[L]ogical evaluation is constrained by the possibilities of rhetorical analysis. In other words, the rhetorician must clear the way ... for the logician." This is not to suggest that rhetoric has priority over logic (or dialectic), but it is to insist that a theory of argumentation will situate the latter two within a rhetorical casing. To completely grasp an argument requires an understanding of its actual rhetorical context, and this appreciation should survive even in situations where the context may not be fully recoverable. We look for the make-up of the arguer and the audience, their respective backgrounds, their relationship, and their expectations of each other, all of which may influence our interpretations of the arguments involved. And we set this in a social and temporal context, against the background of relevant events.

As the work of Wenzel (1987a, 1987b, 1985, 1980, 1979) indicates, the question of rhetorical argumentation has not been completely marginalized in recent moves to develop informal logics and recover dialectical argumentation. More generally, the relationship between rhetoric and philosophical argument has received considerable attention in the essays of Henry W. Johnstone, Jr. (1978), where the importance of the rhetorical is stressed.

Don S. Levi (1995) offers a defense of rhetoric in the sense that it provides a better understanding of what it means to think critically about an argument than does logic. Through looking at the rhetorical context of an argument, particularly the identity of the audience, he argues that 'rhetoric' involves more than just rhetorical effectiveness. While the account Levi offers is somewhat preliminary and wants for good illustrations, it indicates an awareness that at least a basic sense of "logical" correctness can be reconciled with a sense of rhetorical context.

More elaborate, and noticeably Aristotelian, is the account offered by Thomas Farrell (1977). His three constituents of rhetorical argument echo the insights of the *Rhetoric*:

- i. The complicity of an audience in argumentative development;
- ii. The probable relation between rhetorical argument and judgement;
- iii. The normative force of knowledge presumed and created by rhetorical argument (1977:142).

In his discussion, Farrell adds a contemporary nuance to each of these, speaking throughout of a "rhetorical validity." For example, in light of the very important first sense (i. above), which we saw in the *actively engaged audience* of rhetorical argument, some of Hitler's reasoning (culled from *Mein Kampf*) can be judged "invalid" since it fails to "address and include an appropriate audience" (1977:145). And with respect to the third point, he proposes that "the actual premises of rhetorical argument may be regarded as valid, based upon their relation to the social knowledge attributed to specific audiences" (1977:147).

William Harpine (1985:97) responds to Farrell that "the dialectical and rhetorical perspectives cannot serve the purposes of logic." Effectiveness is not soundness, Harpine insists. Perhaps not, in the sense that logic confers on that term. But our discussion of the *Rhetoric* has served to show that there is more to rhetorical argument than effectiveness and that it possesses a strong sense of reasonableness with far greater application than formal validity. It is not so much whether rhetoric and dialectic can serve the purposes of logic, than whether they can each be clear about their own purposes, and whether logic should dictate the terms of reasonableness in the way that the tradition has encouraged. Harpine (109) further complains that Farrell's criteria are irrelevant to non-

rhetorical arguments. In one sense, he is correct, and it would be surprising if Farrell contested it. But in a deeper sense all arguments that matter, whether or not they solely seek action, are rooted in rhetorical contexts. Whether those contexts are uncovered and their components elevated to play a role in an argument's evaluation is what is at issue here.[5](#)

Of all the contemporary models available to us, Perelman's (1982) rhetorical model of argumentation recommends itself for a number of its features and insights. What is essentially rhetorical about it is its unrelenting interest in audiences, far beyond anything that Levi indicates. A principal thesis of *The New Rhetoric* (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969:44) is that "argumentation is a function of the audience addressed." Two audiences are offered for theoretical analysis: the particular or specific audience of the actual situation and the universal audience developed out of the first audience. With this tandem, the account addresses one of the primary challenges confronting argumentation theory: the demand for an account that provides *both* specific criteria of evaluation relative to the occasion *and* objective criteria that avoid a thorough relativism.

The goal of all argumentation according to this model is not the deduction of conclusions from premises or just the resolution of disputes, but the creation or strengthening of the adherence of the minds of the two audiences to the claims presented for their assent.

There is also a second, less explicit, goal which recommends rhetorical considerations in argumentation. Beyond the interest placed in the whole person, both of the arguer and the audience, is the development of a model of the arguer and audience as 'reasonable'. A model characterized by its concern for people. This is particularly important given the traditional conception of rhetoric as advocating the exploitation of audiences to achieve its ends, of making the weaker argument appear stronger and thereby deceiving the audience. Perelman's rhetorical model rejects argumentative strategies based on manipulation (Golden, 1986:293; Crosswhite, 1995). And what begins to emerge is a model of argumentation concerned not just with the adherence of minds to claims put forward but also the improvement of those minds.

In relation to this, Aristotle's proposal in the *Rhetoric*, as discussed above, is noteworthy for the sense of invitation that is extended to the audience. The audience is invited into the argumentation to become a part of it, where argumentation is an act of reciprocal involvement. This is a view of argumentation that sees it create an environment in which the "self-persuasion" of the audience, as it were, can take place. Rather than being exploited, or aggressively persuaded, the audience is given the opportunity to complete the argumentation and evaluate arguments in terms of the reasoning involved. The sense of autonomy this grants to the audience (noted by McCabe (1994) above) suggests an important sense of reasonableness which in turn can meet the concerns raised by critics of the "rational" tradition, particularly the charge that argumentation is essentially adversarial.






One can still talk about persuasiveness and conviction under this model. But not in the traditional sense. The audience is persuaded by the argumentation, not by the arguer (hence not by any "rhetorical tricks"). The audience is complicit in the completion of the argumentation. With its background, beliefs, etc., it is part of the context which comprises the argumentation. Hence, the key sense that the audience, when it is persuaded, is persuaded by its own reflections, its own reasoning through of the argument it has drawn from the arguer's speech.

The papers that are collected in these *Proceedings* (along with their commentaries, in most cases) are papers that bear in some way on the themes of rhetoric, argumentation, and/or the relationship between them. This is not to suggest that the papers, in whole or in part, follow the tone of this introduction, or agree with the claims made here about rhetoric and argumentation and the relationship between them. These *Proceedings* comprise papers

as diverse and far-ranging in their theses and perspectives as is fitting for the subject matter involved. Some happily wed the concerns of rhetoric and argumentation and work on the boundary between them. Others propose some measure of incommensurability between the two and argue to that effect. Still others announce and develop projects within either the domain of rhetoric or argumentation, many of these furthering work for which the authors are already well-recognized.

One of the principal goals behind the OSSA conference on Argumentation & Rhetoric was to bring together scholars from different geographical locations and different disciplines, all of whose work bore on the conference theme. Altogether, eight countries and fifteen disciplines were represented, with a mix of established scholars and some just beginning academic careers and who publish here for the first time. These papers are a further addition to a growing body of literature that testifies to the quality of work currently being done in argumentation theory and rhetorical studies and hold promise for yet more work of interest still to come.

Notes

1. Unless otherwise noted, references to the *Rhetoric* are to the Kennedy translation (1991), and references to other Aristotelian works are from the Barnes' edition (1984). 
2. The explosion of rhetoric, or the 'rhetorical turn', which has emerged since Ricoeur's study does not restrict rhetoric to this third part, but recognizes all of its elements in a wider context. See, for example, Simons (1990), Mailloux (1995). 
3. Heidegger (*Being and Time*, 1962:178) hailed the *Rhetoric* for heralding the "first systematic hermeneutic of the everydayness of being with one another" (Cited in Kennedy, 1991:124). This 'Publicness' has a 'mood' and creates 'moods', which in turn the orator must understand in order to arouse and guide them. 
4. When speaking of maxims, Aristotle attributes *ethos* to the speech itself (II.21.1395b). But his point here is that the maxim contains a moral evaluation which will reflect on the character of the speaker. 
5. In a related way, Walton (1995) argues that the determination of formal fallacies like 'affirming the consequent' involve essential linguistic and contextual elements. 

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